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HIE #5
27 November 1950

INDOCHINA: CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS

Terms of Reference

Problem:

To assess the strategic importance of and current situation in Indochina and to estimate the several courses of action open to Communist China-USSR and to the West and the consequences and probable developments arising from these courses of action.

Scope:

This estimate will examine the strategic importance of Indochina. It will assess the current situation in the area and consider the current capabilities and intentions of the various groups involved in the Indochina conflict; the French, the Bao Dai regime, the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists. It will estimate also the several courses of action which are open to Communist China-USSR and to the West. It will assess the consequences of these courses of action on other countries of the region (including India), on key areas outside the Far East and on the US. Finally, it will estimate the probable future developments in Indochina.

Assumption:

The USSR will not openly intervene in Indochina through military means.

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Note: Recently announced French concessions to the Vietnamese indicate a more positive approach toward the independence of Vietnam. Insufficient information is available however, to assess the significance of these concessions. Particular parts of the paper where this new development might affect the estimate have been noted with an asterisk.

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INDOCHINA: CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Consequences of Communist Domination of Indochina

1. The geographical position of Indochina coupled with the Communist forces which have been mustered there under the cloak of nationalism, makes that country the easiest means by which Communist control can be extended from China into Southeast Asia. The fall of Indochina will confront Thailand with Communist military and political pressures that may prove irresistible unless immediate and substantial Western assistance were forthcoming. If Thailand accommodated itself to Communism, the position of the British in Malaya could become ~~much more~~ serious, ~~perhaps~~ critical.

2. The extent to which Western prestige would be adversely affected by the loss of Indochina is difficult to assess, although it is certain that many non-Communist countries throughout the world and particularly in Asia would become more susceptible to propaganda to the effect that the advance of Communism is inexorable.

B. The Present Crisis

3. French and associated forces in the critical area of Tonkin have been compelled by the Communist-led Viet Minh Army to withdraw into the delta of the Red

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River and to a narrow coastal strip extending to the China border (see map).

In Annam and Cochinchina, French forces are barely holding their own against Viet Minh sabotage and guerrilla warfare. Both Laos and Cambodia have become increasingly subject to Viet Minh infiltration.

4. Although warfare in Tonkin has been of a guerrilla nature, the regular forces of the Viet Minh are rapidly achieving equality with the best French units and are now capable of raiding in strength almost any French position in Tonkin and probably of substantially reducing the area of French control in the delta area. Elsewhere in Vietnam, the Viet Minh will probably continue to use guerrilla tactics. ~~There appears to be no coordinated Viet Minh plan for Laos or Cambodia.~~

5. Chinese Communist assistance to the Viet Minh has been primarily in terms of materiel (small arms and light artillery) and training. It is estimated that at least 35,000 Viet Minh troops have received, or are receiving, training in South China. Although small numbers of Chinese Communist cadres and advisors are believed to be serving with Viet Minh elements, there is no evidence of the integration of Chinese units into the Viet Minh army. *(Except for propaganda support and political recognition of the Viet Minh direct)* Soviet assistance ^{is not} ~~thus far appears~~ ^{evident.} ~~to be limited to the sequencence or ordering of Chinese Communist aid.~~

6. French and associated forces in Indochina number approximately ^{350,000} ~~350,000~~ men, the core of which is the French Far Eastern Ground Forces numbering 145,000.

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aside from a shortage of troops and the obsolescence of military equipment, the French military effort has suffered from a command organization designed to cope with Viet Minh guerrilla activity rather than with a now-emerging efficient striking force, undue control of operations by Paris, faulty French intelligence, undue dispersion of French forces in static commitments, and the tendency to distrust the political reliability of indigenous forces and to relegate them to minor defense roles.

7. The French claim that their objective in Indochina is to protect that area against Communist aggression has not convinced a substantial segment of world opinion, including the Vietnamese, that the French are not screening colonial aims. Although the 6 March (1949) Agreements provide for Vietnam's independence within the "French Union", the French have interpreted this so narrowly that most Vietnamese, including the leading figures in the Bao Dai Government, question whether the French ever intend to relinquish control. Under such circumstances there is little chance of attracting non-Communist supporters from Ho Chi Minh or of creating an effective Vietnam army.

8. For the Vietnamese, the necessary steps to real independence are the creation of a National Army under Vietnamese command and the acquisition of fiscal autonomy. The French have demonstrated an apparent lack of energy and sincerity in

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implementing their avowed program of expanding the Vietnamese Army. On the other hand, the Vietnamese have been slow to produce plans for a National Army. The question of Vietnam's fiscal autonomy is being discussed at the conference at Pau, France between the Associated States and France. In five months of discussion, the French have been unwilling to make substantial concessions on this issue.*

9. Only in North Vietnam has the Bao Dai government made significant progress in obtaining popular support. Prospects for a strong anti-Communist government in Vietnam hinge on a coalition between the strong right-of-center, national Dai Viet party and the native Roman Catholic population. Such a coalition is not yet in sight.

10. The Viet Minh, which has been recognized as the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" by the Soviet bloc and by Yugoslavia (whose recognition was spurned), is led by Communists, but has many "farce-bitterns" among its following. The propaganda line of the Viet Minh is barely distinguishable from that of the Soviet bloc and attacks on the US have recently become frequent and bitter. If Ho Chi Minh were to secure control over all Vietnam, it would be inevitable that a full-fledged Communist regime would be established and maintained.

C. Courses of Action Open to Communist China and the USSR

11. The Chinese Communists will probably continue ^{to} expand their technical

 *The French have recently announced further concessions to the Vietnam, but insufficient information is available at this time to assess their significance.

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and advisory aid to the Viet Minh both as a means of assisting that organization and of securing control over it. So long as the Viet Minh holds the initiative over the French, large-scale incorporation of Chinese Communists into Viet Minh forces is considered unlikely; an open invasion by Chinese Communist forces is even more unlikely.

12. It is considered probable that some Soviet assistance will be administered through Soviet representatives in South China and Hainan and that a few Soviet advisors may even be assigned to Viet Minh forces. Material will continue to be provided by the Chinese Communists, however, rather than directly by the USSR.

D. Course of Action Open to the French

13. The extensive support which must be rallied to the Bao Dai Government if the Viet Minh is to be defeated would have been precluded by a continuation of the current French policy in Indochina. On the other hand, if the French give wholehearted implementation to recently announced political concessions aimed at full independence for Vietnam, it would provide a maximum opportunity for attracting nationalist support to Bao Dai.

14. Should the French feel that the scale of military operation necessary to contain the Viet Minh is not worth the effort, and that the necessary aid from the US is not forthcoming, they may attempt a negotiated settlement. The French would

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prefer, if the choice is open to them, to negotiate through the UN rather than directly with Ho Chi Minh.

E. Courses of Action Open to the US

15. French policy vis-a-vis Indochina is a major factor shaping US action to meet the crisis in that area. Unless the French demonstrate their sincere intentions to give Vietnam genuine independence, courses of action taken by the US will have only short-range effects.

16. One of the major restraints on US latitude of action in Indochina is the fact that the Viet Minh represents essentially an indigenous movement, and it is therefore impossible to enlist the degree of support among non-Communist nations, particularly those in Asia, for an aggressive anti-Viet Minh policy such as was mastered in opposition to the forces of North Korea.

17. Assuming no concomitant significant change in French policy, the acceleration of US aid would only postpone the establishment of an unchallenged Communist regime in Indochina. If such assistance were granted against the background of real French concessions, however, US aid could be more effective, although at this advanced stage in the development of Viet Minh strength, there is no assurance that it would result in significant defections from the Viet Minh, that a strong anti-Viet Minh spirit could be crystallized or that an effective national Vietnamese Army

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18. Full scale US military intervention in Indochina would run the risk of war with Communist China. Even if such hostilities did not eventuate and the Viet Minh were defeated in conventional warfare, guerrilla warfare would continue and the situation would probably become analogous to that in Malaya, but on a larger scale.

F. *UN Courses of Action open to the UN*

19. As long as French sovereignty over Indochina continues, the UN would be reluctant to authorize any enforcement action in that area. Even with a French proclamation of independence, the UN majority, while probably willing to arbitrate in the civil war between the Vietnam and the Viet Minh which would probably follow independence, would hesitate to intervene with force.

20. There is, however, a growing recognition on the part of most UN member nations that the Viet Minh is an instrument of international Communist expansion. Moreover, many of the Latin American countries would be influenced by Catholic sentiment against a Communist government.

21. The UN could take anyone of a number of courses of action in Indochina among which are the establishment of a "United Nations Commission", the establishment of a border commission, negotiation through the UN, or armed intervention by UN forces. The success of any of these actions, in terms of Western objectives, would

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depend, in large part, on the willingness of the majority of member states to oppose the Viet Minh. This, in turn, would be determined by the extent to which they were convinced that the Vietnam was a truly independent Government representing the nationalist aspirations of the people of Indochina.

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INDOCHINA: CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS

Discussion

I. The Setting

A. Strategic Importance of Indochina

1. Military

a. General

Indochina, because of its geographic location, constitutes the most accessible passageway for the extension of Communist military-political control from its present Far Eastern focus in China on into mainland Southeast Asia. Communist domination of Indochina would place Thailand under a powerful threat from the north and east, while at the same time reinforcing psychological Communist pressure on Burma. The denial of Indochina to advancing Communist forces, although not producing an absolute barrier, could compel the Communist exploitation of other areas, less advantageous from the point of view of terrain or indigenous Communist strength.

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b. Importance to the US

Both the large commitment of French military strength in Indochina and the allocation of US military aid to the support of French and local non-Communist forces there constitute a diversion of military potential urgently needed in the development of Western Europe and defenses. The defeat of the French forces in Indochina would represent, to the West, a significant loss of forces in being.

c. Importance to the USSR

Because of Indochina's geographic position, Communist control of the area would deny to the US and its allies a potential air and naval base from which targets of military importance within Communist-held territory could be attacked or from which Communist sea communications could be interdicted. At the same time, such control would give the USSR an air and naval base suitable for attacks against targets within Western-held territory or against Western air and sea communications.

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2. Economic

a. General

From an economic standpoint, Indochina is presently of no direct importance to either the US or USSR. US trade with Indochina, both before and following World War II, has been insignificant. The US does not depend upon imports of any particular commodity from Indochina and US investments in the area are insignificant.

b. US interests

To the extent that Communist domination of Indochina would pose a threat to neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, especially Malaya, sources of raw materials outside Indochina -- particularly rubber and tin -- which are of importance to the US, would be placed in jeopardy.

c. Soviet interests

Communist control of Indochina could make Indochina's potential 1,500,000 tons of annual rice exports, 1,500,000 tons of annual production of anthracite coal and 100,000 tons of annual rubber production available to the Soviet sphere. Control of these commodities

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by the Communist bloc could represent a bargaining point in the Far East (e.g., with an independent Japan).

3. Political and Psychological

a. General

The US declaration that military assistance "to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina" will be increased in order that "the Communist movement may not further threaten the security of the Pacific area by force of arms" 1/ has made Indochina one of the symbols of the US intent to halt Communist aggression in the Far East. The political and psychological effects of a Communist victory in Indochina on other areas of Southeast and South Asia would be a decrease of confidence in the US, and encouragement of indigenous Communist movements in other countries of Southeast Asia.

In the event that Indochina is lost, however, the net effect would be conditioned largely by events elsewhere in the world. Major

1/ Address by Secretary Acheson delivered on 29 June 1950.

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defeats of international Communism elsewhere, such as a complete UN victory in Korea, would somewhat off-set a Communist success in Indochina. On the other hand, the loss of Indochina -- alone or accompanied by other Western defeats -- would give apparent validity to Soviet propaganda that the advance of international Communism is inexorable. As a consequence, certain nations (such as Burma and Thailand) might prepare for eventual accommodation with Communist Asia, while other nations (such as India and Indonesia) might endeavor to strengthen their positions of neutrality so as to avoid any compromise of their relations with the Soviet bloc, should eventual accommodation become desirable or necessary.

The circumstances and the rapidity of Indochina's loss, together with the extent to which Chinese Communist or U.S.R. influence on the Ho regime is apparent, would condition many Asian countries' reaction to a Viet Minh victory in Indochina. If it were clear that the victory was achieved through overt aggression by external forces, rather than through a triumph of the indigenous forces of nationalism, the regimes of other threatened countries in the region might well stiffen their

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resistance to the spread of Communism. Moreover, ^{any} ~~this~~ determination of the peoples of non-Communist countries of the Far East to resist Communist pressures would ~~be in proportion to the extent to which~~ ^{tend to increase as} Chinese or Soviet influence on the Ho regime ~~is apparent~~ ^(became) ~~to them~~ ^(to them). If, however, a Viet Minh victory became a fait accompli within a matter of a few months, the countries of the region would probably resign themselves to what they regarded as inevitable.

Finally, all governments in the non-Communist countries of the Far East will, as a matter of self-interest, attempt to maintain themselves in power and to maintain the independence of their states. Every government in Southeast and South Asia is at present non-Communist and none of them will voluntarily capitulate to the Communists unless confronted with irresistible pressures. Major international developments, particularly those affecting the East-West power struggle, as well as the extent to which the US and other countries of the West provide these governments with tangible and substantial evidences of support, would condition their willingness and ability to withstand the pressures developed by the loss of Indochina.

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b. Reactions in South and Southeast Asia

(1) Thailand. Because of its central geographic position, Thailand can be either an obstacle or a bridge to further Communist gains in Southeast Asia. At present, the Phibun government appears to have sufficient support to remain in power and to maintain its policy of active cooperation with the West. Thailand could not be depended upon to maintain its pro-Western policy in the event of Indochina's fall, however, unless immediate and convincing assurances of effective Western support were forthcoming.

The latent internal threat of the Chinese and Indochinese minorities in Thailand, together with the presence of well-trained Chinese and Viet Minh armies near its borders, could -- in the absence of decisive Western backing -- place irresistible pressure upon the Thai government favoring accommodation to Communism.

Should Indochina come under Communist control, Communist efforts (short of outright invasion) to control Thailand would probably be directed initially toward establishing a Communist

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military force in adjacent Laos or Cambodia and strengthening indigenous Communist elements in order to precipitate civil conflict. Thailand's armed forces, while probably capable, at least in the short run, of maintaining internal security and dealing with limited border incursions, could not without substantial aid, repel a large-scale invasion by Viet Minh or Chinese Communist forces.

(2) Malaya. If the Thai Government remains firm in its anti-Communist stand, it would be difficult to send large-scale assistance to the Communists insurgent in Malaya. Under such circumstances, the fall of Indochina would have no decisive effects within Malaya, although it would strengthen the morale of the rebels. If the Thai Government should capitulate to the Communists, however, Malaya would be faced with a direct overland threat and could probably not long withstand the mounting pressure from both internal and external Communist forces.

(3) Burma. Although officially neutral toward the Indochina

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conflict, the Burmese Government has always been sympathetic to the Viet Minh, identifying it as a region fighting an anti-colonialist struggle. On the other hand, Burma has been gradually softening its anti-Western attitude. Furthermore, it has been making progress toward internal stability and Communist domination of Indochina would have little immediate effect in facilitating Communist infiltration of Burma. Whether there will be generated in Burma an attitude of accommodation or whether Burma will stiffen its attitude toward Communist governments in Asia will depend to a considerable extent on the attitude of India.

(4) India. There are some indications that India has suffered a certain amount of disillusionment in her relations with Communist China. Although recent Chinese Communist actions in Tibet have created an awareness of the threat posed to India's own security, the threat of Communist expansion in Southeast Asia is not yet fully understood by India. Indian will to resist Communist aggression would not be significantly strengthened by the fall of Indochina alone unless this were accomplished through direct Chinese Communist invasion. On the other hand, any significant Communist

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expansion in Burma, however accomplished, would cause the Indian Government to become seriously concerned over Communism as a predatory threat in Asia.

(5) Indonesia. Indonesia, while maintaining an officially neutral policy, would tend to be sympathetic toward a Viet Minh government which achieved power by its own strength and would regard such a regime as an expression of true nationalism. Should a Viet Minh-controlled Indochina emerge as a result of Chinese Communist invasion, Indonesia would be less sympathetic and would probably follow a policy of wary neutrality. Emergence of any Communist regime in Indochina, however, would be considered by most Indonesians as a defeat for the West (particularly for the US) and would increase indigenous Communist strength by improving Communist morale and by developing respect and support among many non-Communist Indonesians and resident Chinese.

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(6) Philippines. The Government of the Philippines is completely committed to a firm stand against Communism, which is represented at home in the form of the Huk movement. The outcome of events in Indochina would little modify its will to resist aggression from

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without.

c. Reaction in Western Europe

Should Indochina be lost to France without recourse to the UN, this development would be regarded both in France and elsewhere in Western Europe as a serious blow to France's world position. Except in France, however, where the loss would probably subject the Government to severe political strain, the event would be accepted in Western Europe without any grave internal political result. It would be viewed generally with concern, however, as a victory of militant Communism. Among the other countries having colonial interests -- the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain -- some alarm would probably be felt as to possible sympathetic developments of nationalist sentiment in their own areas of special interest. In France and Spain, but probably not elsewhere, there would be some disposition to attribute the defeat to an inadequacy of US support.

Before accepting a total loss of Indochina, however, France would probably resort to an appeal of the problem to the UN. If Indochina were then lost by France, in the course of UN investigation or temporizing, the

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prestige of the UN would be damaged although the extent of the damage would depend on the nature of the UN commitment and the military circumstances. If Indochina were lost by a defeat of UN forces, however, the reaction in Western Europe would be one of profound discouragement. French resentment, which has grown out of their belief that the US has not adequately assisted them, would be aggravated, and other countries would have misgivings over the ability of the US to support its commitments on a world-wide scale. The loss of prestige by the UN would obviously be serious. Repercussions of the fall of Indochina on the other areas of French control, North Africa in particular, would lead to a sharp increase in the intensity of nationalist demands for autonomy and would, in the long run, contribute to a weakening of French control. The loss of Indochina would intensify European concern over Soviet intentions and would increase the urgency of defense measures in Western Europe. It would not, however, cause the West European nations to seek or accept an understanding with the USSR, nor to retreat from their commitments to Western defense.

d. Advantages accruing to the USSR

The USSR derives advantages from the present situation in Indochina, even without complete Communist control. It ties down French

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troops which might otherwise be used in Western Europe and constitutes an economic drain on France and the US. Viet Minh operations, especially when successful, serve as an important propaganda example to other Asian peoples. The conflict also serves to promote differences between the US and some Asian countries, e.g., India and Indonesia.

The extension of Communist control over all of Indochina would be a sharp blow to Western and US prestige (especially since the US has committed itself to support of the French), and would enable the Communists to increase their pressure on other Southeast Asian states.

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B. The Current Situation in Indochina**1. Military Situation****a. The Present Military Crisis**

French and associated forces in the critical area of Tonkin have been compelled by the Communist-led Viet Minh Army to withdraw into the delta of the Red River and to a narrow coastal strip extending to the China border (see map). Although the French forces may soon be forced to relinquish all of Tonkin, their withdrawal into the delta area has improved their immediate tactical position. Good roads connect all parts of the defense area and the French will be able quickly to concentrate infantry, artillery and armored units at any point along the delta defense line. Tactical air support will be more readily available and amphibious forces can be concentrated quickly.

French forces are barely holding their own against Viet Minh guerrilla warfare and sabotage in Annam and Cochinchina and cannot spare troops for use in Tonkin. Laos has become increasingly subject

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to Viet Minh infiltration and the French and associated forces there are unable to prevent small Viet Minh units and smuggling convoys from passing through Laotian territory. In Cambodia the situation is similar although friendly forces are slightly stronger and probably could withstand overt Viet Minh incursion longer than could those in Laos.

So long as the French hold the Red River delta, the Viet Minh is forced to base its activities in the surrounding mountainous areas. The sparse population and meager food supplies outside the delta make the lands controlled by the Viet Minh unsuitable as a solid foundation of national power. In Annam and Cochinchina neither side holds a preponderance of the rice area.

b. Viet Minh Organization, Strength and Capabilities

Total Viet Minh military strength amounts to about 237,500 troops, of whom 147,500 are well-armed regulars. About 33,000 of the militia troops are lightly armed. Viet Minh forces in Tonkin include

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about 106 battalions (55,000 men) of regular troops and 28 battalions (14,000 men) of militiamen. The regular forces usually operate in battalion strength and are rapidly achieving equality with the best French battalions. Although warfare in Tonkin has been of a guerrilla nature, the Viet Minh now has the capability of raiding in strength almost any French position in Tonkin and probably of substantially reducing the area of French control in the delta area.

Viet Minh tactics in Annam and Cochinchina have been and will probably continue to be guerrilla warfare. Total regular forces in these areas are 87 battalions (43,000 men). Their level of training and equipment is inferior to that of Viet Minh forces in Tonkin. For the foreseeable future, it will probably be the task of the Viet Minh in Annam and Cochinchina to pin down a maximum number of French forces rather than to expand their own areas of control. ~~There appears to be no coordinated Viet Minh plan for Laos or Cambodia.~~

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Although positive evidence is lacking, reports indicate that substantial quantities of small arms, and small quantities of light field and anti-aircraft artillery, have been furnished to the Viet Minh by Communist China during 1950. Improvement of roads in south China and Tonkin, establishment of supply dumps, and repair and improvement of airfields on both sides of the Indochina border, all indicate that increasing aid will be obtained from the Chinese Communists.

Integration into Viet Minh units of Chinese Communist training cadres, wearing Viet Minh insignia and ostensibly coming under Viet Minh leadership, is believed already to have taken place *(on a small scale)*. More important, however, is the movement of large numbers of Viet Minh personnel to camps in south China (see map) where they are trained and re-equipped. It is estimated that training facilities in these areas can accommodate 20,000 troops, and that at least 35,000 have received, or are receiving, such training. In addition

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to general infantry instruction by the Chinese Communists, Soviet personnel reportedly are training Viet Minh artillery, tank, and possibly air crews in south China.

There are believed to be small numbers of Chinese Communist training cadres and advisors, possibly down to the battalion and company level, within some Viet Minh units. There is no firm indication of the integration of Chinese units into the Viet Minh Army.

Soviet assistance to the Ho Chi Minh region appears thus far to have been limited to indirect support by encouraging, permitting, or ordering utilization of Chinese Communist resources. There are few confirmed reports of the actual presence of Soviet personnel in Indochina. There have been unconfirmed reports of Soviet advisors working with the Chinese Communists in south China and Hainan Island, in connection with arms supply for the Viet Minh, with development of harbor facilities at Yulin (Hainan), and with the training of Viet Minh artillery, tank and even aircraft crews.

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The Viet Minh owe its popular support largely to its highly publicized goal of complete elimination of French control. Even Western-oriented Vietnamese who have personally experienced the tyrannical methods of the Viet Minh are reluctant to fight against it so long as there seems ground to believe that the Bao Dai Government is a means of prolonging French control. Thus, everywhere in Vietnam French forces operate in fundamentally hostile territory.

c. French and French-controlled Organization, Strength and Capabilities

French and French-controlled ground forces in Indochina total 350,000 men. The core of this force is made up of the French Far Eastern Ground Forces (FTEG) which consists of 145,000 French, North African, Senegalese, Foreign Legion and Indo-Chinese troops. The remainder is composed of a miscellaneous grouping of indigenous regular and para-military units.

The FTEG in Tonkin numbers 53,000 men. In addition native military troops are scattered throughout the delta to prevent Viet

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Minh sabotage and assassination attempts. In Annam and Cochinchina FIEU forces total 23,500 and 56,000 respectively. Each of the three Indochinese states has its own army, the largest of which is the Vietnam Army with a paper strength of 57,200.

French naval forces are adequate to support the ground forces in small-scale amphibious operations and to patrol the inland waterways. No complete blockade of the Viet Minh-held section of the coastline is now possible.

The French Air Force in Indochina is small and poorly equipped. It is presently incapable of expanding its operations for any sustained period of time.

In addition to serious obsolescence of military equipment in all categories and a shortage of troops, the French military effort has suffered from many defects which should be remedied without recourse to foreign aid or reinforcements from Europe:

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(1) A command organization, designed to deal with guerrillas rather than the comparatively efficient Viet Minh striking force, which is now emerging. The French forces, although of high individual quality, have lacked the necessary flexibility, particularly in Tonkin, to cope with large-scale mobile Viet Minh operations.

(2) Undue control of operations by Paris has slowed vital decisions, has sapped the initiative of local commanders, and has lowered the morale of certain senior commanders.

(3) Faulty French intelligence, which has underestimated Viet Minh capabilities.

(4) Undue dispersion of French forces in static commitments, resulting in unsuccessful attempts to hold ground and an inability to maintain a mobile defense and adequate reserves.

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(5) The tendency to distrust the political reliability of the forces of the Associated States and to relegate them to comparatively minor defense roles, together with an apparent lack of desire to utilize this important source of manpower in frontline operations.

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2. Political Situation

a. Background

Indochina is comprised of the three states of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia whose legal status is that of Associated States in the French Union. Vietnam, the largest and most important, includes the former French protectorates of Tonkin and Annam and the former colony of Cochinchina. Laos and Cambodia were also former French protectorates.

Strong political and military opposition to the French authorities and the French-sponsored native government in Vietnam has been consistently provided by a nationalist movement controlled by a Communist minority under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, a Moscow-trained professional revolutionary. Ho Chi Minh's movement, called the Viet Minh, claims sovereignty over Vietnam. The French have established a rival Vietnam regime under ex-Emperor Bao Dai and have granted it limited independence within the French Union.

Relations between the French and Bao Dai's State of Vietnam are regulated by the Agreements of 8 March 1949 and the Supplementary Accords of 30 December 1949 which provided for the transfer of certain

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administrative functions from the French High Commissariat in Indo-China to the Bao Dai Government. The French have concluded similar agreements with the governments of Laos and Cambodia. Further agreements on machinery for the administration of services common to the three Associated States have been under negotiation since last June by representatives of the interested parties at the Pau Conference in France*

The two rival Vietnam governments -- that of Bao Dai and that of Ho Chi Minh -- have been recognized by the Western Powers and by the Soviet bloc respectively. Communist China and the USSR recognized Ho shortly before the French Government's ratification of the agreements with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Immediately after ratification the United States, United Kingdom and some 25 other nations recognized the Associated States. In Asia, only Thailand and South Korea followed the lead of the Western Powers. India, and most other Asian states argue that Bao Dai does not have widespread popular support and state

* New political "concessions" have recently been announced by the French, but not enough information is available to assess their significance.

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that they will recognize that group achieving effective control of Indochina regardless of its political coloration.

b. The French Position

In its simplest terms the French aim in Indochina is the preservation of the French Union. So far as can be determined (the machinery of the French Union is still in the formative stage), France does not intend that any member of the Union but France itself shall enjoy real independence. The French assertion -- however sincere -- that their objective is to protect Indochina against Communist aggression has failed to satisfy a substantial segment of world opinion, including the Vietnamese, that the French themselves are not simply screening colonial aims. So long as the French refuse to renounce all claims to special privilege and authority in Indochina, even in the distant future, it is inevitable that their actions will be viewed as aggressive and colonial in character. French statements have given substance to this view. High French officials have repeatedly emphasized that France is determined to derive substantial material compensation in return for its

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present commitments in Indochina. Minister for Associated States Letourneau's statement that France must retain its "civilizing influence" in Indochina runs directly counter to anti-imperialist sentiment in Vietnam and elsewhere. The French have made much of the financial burden which their policy in Indochina has imposed and they argue that so long as this condition obtains the Vietnamese should not expect full independence. Actually, the additional annual burden that Indochina currently places on the French treasury is estimated at less than the contemplated US aid to Indochina during the coming year.

The 8 March Agreements provide for Vietnam's independence within the French Union." Although this formula and (with certain exceptions) the terms of the Agreements in general are theoretically flexible enough to permit the granting of virtual independence to Vietnam, the French authorities have interpreted the Agreements so narrowly as to cause most Vietnamese including the leading figures in the Bao Dai government to question whether the French ever intend to relinquish control.

Nationalism is the outstanding political fact in Vietnam. It underlies the activity of almost all politically active Vietnamese, whether

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in the ranks of the Viet Minh or the Bao Dai government. As long as it is not clearly apparent to the Vietnamese that France intends to accord an independent status to Vietnam there is little chance of attracting from Ho Chi Minh his non-Communist supporters. Hatred of the French is almost pathologic among nearly all Vietnamese, and they will not be satisfied until all officials of the French Government leave Indochina. International recognition has in no way satisfied the basic desire of the Vietnamese to be free of French control.

For the Vietnamese the necessary steps to real independence are, first, the creation of a National Army under Vietnamese command, and, second, acquisition of fiscal autonomy. The first is partly dependent upon the second in that the 8 March Agreements provide that Vietnam shall support its army from its own budget. At the present time the major part of the revenue collected in Indochina derives from customs paid at Vietnamese ports which are still under French control.

Despite the grave threat to their military control, the French have shown an apparent lack of energy and sincerity in the implementation of their avowed program of expanding the Vietnamese Army. (See

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Appendix - On the other hand, the Vietnamese leaders both because of personal rivalries as well as a unanimous desire to extract maximum political concessions from the French, have been slow to reduce plans for a National Army.

The present Vietnam Army theoretically includes nine battalions which, however, cannot be used as independent units because communications, quartermaster, medical and ordnance services are lacking. Only five of these battalions are operational with French Union forces, and these have been broken into small static defense units. A large number of Vietnamese auxiliary and para-military forces are scattered throughout the country, their relationship to the French command varying from one place to another.

Fear that a rapid expansion of Vietnamese forces would endanger their position has been frequently manifested by the French. Assuming that no further political concessions are to be granted to the Vietnamese, such a fear is certainly warranted.

c. The Pan Conference

* Now political concessions have recently been announced by the French, but not enough information is yet available to assess their significance.

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The question of Vietnam's fiscal autonomy (in particular the questions of control of customs) has been the prime issue at the current conference between the Associated States and France, which was convened on June 29, 1950 at Pau in Southern France. From the Vietnamese viewpoint, the establishment of an army and the survival of Vietnam as an independent nation depend largely on the willingness of the French to permit the Vietnam Government to dispose of customs receipts collected within its territory. During five months' negotiations at Pau the French have been unwilling to make this concession.

There is little reason to believe that the transfer of customs authority to the Vietnamese would seriously prejudice French rights or commitments in Indochina. It is almost certain, on the other hand, that so long as the Vietnam Government fails to control the most important single source of revenue within its territory, its ability to attract popular support and able individuals, and to take the initiative in the development of a National Army will be seriously inhibited. The attitude of the French at Pau toward customs control is probably the most conspicuous example of their determination to maintain a maximum of authority

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in Indochina even at the cost of a more effective joint French-Vietnamese effort against rebellion and invasion.

d. Government and Politics in Vietnam

As a national entity the Bao Dai government has won little popular support. It is only at the regional level, specifically in North Vietnam, that significant strides have been made in obtaining the backing of the populace. Prospects for a strong anti-Communist government in Viet Nam hinge principally on the establishment of a coalition between the Dai Viet party and the native Roman Catholic population. The Dai Viet party has its headquarters in Hanoi under the leadership of Governor Nguyen Huu Tri of North Vietnam, ardent Nationalist and the outstanding figure among the Vietnamese who have chosen to collaborate with the French. The party, which has been described as "right of center" in its political orientation, has established a virtual monopoly for the administration of North Vietnam and is the best organized and most effective political machine in the French-controlled area.

The Dai Viet's chief rival for political influence in the Tonkin delta is the native Roman Catholic congregation under the leadership of

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five native bishops. These five men are all ardent nationalists and command enormous influence among the country's Catholic population (1 1/2 - 2 million). The strength of the Catholic community derives not only from its numbers but also from its sense of solidarity and the fact that it is a nationwide rather than a purely Tonkinese organization. There has been some friction between the Catholic group and the Dai Viet, probably resulting from the fact that the Dai Viet is able to control and work through the Bao Dai political apparatus, whereas the Catholic leaders have chosen a "fence-sitting" role. No non-Communist bi-partisan combination in Vietnam could approach the strength of a Dai Viet-Catholic coalition.

c. The Viet Minh

From its inception it was known that Communists occupied important positions in the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam", the Viet Minh, and that its president, Ho Chi Minh, was a Russian-trained Communist. Nevertheless, there are many Vietnamese, including a large portion of the "fence-sitters" who reason that they can deal with or dispose of the Communists once the aims of nationalism are achieved.

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Since the arrival of Chinese Communist armies at the Indochina border there has been little attempt to disguise the Communist nature of Ho's regime. Recognized as a full-fledged "people's democracy" at the Women's International Democratic Federation meeting in December 1949, the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" shortly thereafter entered into diplomatic relations with Communist China (January 18, 1950), the USSR (January 30, 1950) and most of the satellites. Recognition by Yugoslavia was spurned.

The propaganda line of the Viet Minh radio is now barely distinguishable from that of the East European satellites, except that more attention is devoted to ties with Communist China than to the USSR. Tribute is also paid to the role of the Indochinese Communist Party in organizing the "revolution in Vietnam" in 1945. Although the Viet Minh refrained from attacks against the United States until about a year ago, such attacks are now frequent and bitter, associating "American imperialism" with "French colonialism".

A number of known Communists have been moved up to important positions in the Ho regime and there are numerous indications that Communist

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methods of control are being extended and tightened down to the village level. It is inevitable that if Ho Chi Minh were to secure control of all Vietnam, a full-fledged Communist regime would be established and maintained. Closely paralleling the adoption of a more overtly Communist orientation has been the adoption of a policy for extending Viet Minh hegemony over Laos and Cambodia, as well as Vietnam.

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II. Courses of Action Open to Communist China and the USSR in Indochina

A. Materiel Aid and Training

Continued materiel and training aid furnished by the Chinese Communists to the Viet Minh is considered certain. The Communist objective is to maintain the Viet Minh initiative in order to obtain early control of all Indochina, or, less likely, merely to pin down French forces there. The Chinese Communists probably will enlarge their advisory and technical assistance both as a means of helping the Viet Minh and of securing control over it. The latter objective would encounter resistance by some Indochinese Communists.

It is probable that some Soviet assistance will be administered through Soviet representatives in south China and Hainan, and a few Soviet advisors may even be assigned to Viet Minh forces. Materiel will continue to be provided by the Chinese Communists, however, rather than directly by the USSR.

B. Incorporation of Chinese Communists into the Viet Minh Forces

Any large-scale incorporation of Chinese Communists into Viet Minh forces, as distinguished from present the materiel aid is unlikely as long as the Viet Minh is holding the initiative against the French. Factors which militate against such a course are (1) the adequate manpower resources of the Viet

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Hinh; (2) the unpopularity of the Chinese among the Vietnamese and (3) the fact that the nationalist appeal of Ho's movement would be compromised by such action.

Should the Viet Minh be gravely threatened by an increase in French military capabilities, the incorporation of Chinese troops into Viet Minh forces would become more probable. By incorporating Chinese troops as units in Viet Minh forces, representing them as volunteers or even as a Vietnamese, there would be minimal risks of international retaliation.

C. Open Invasion by Chinese Communists

Those factors which mitigate against large-scale incorporation of Chinese Communist troops into the Viet Minh tend to make an open invasion by major Chinese Communist forces even less likely. The current Chinese Communist intervention in Korea, however, indicates a change in international Communist strategy, and similar overt intervention in Indochina is probable if action short of this were insufficient to stave off a Viet Minh defeat. Available Chinese Communist armies could quickly overcome the French forces in Tonkin and, if the invasion were carried through in force, would make the French position in Cochinchina untenable.

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III. Courses of Action Open to the West

A. France

1. Continuation of Present Policy*

The extensive support which must be rallied to the Bao Dai Government if the Viet Minh is to be defeated will be precluded by a continuation of the current French policy in Indochina. Under such circumstances, any opportunity of gaining Asian support would be jeopardized, since, in Asian minds, the predominant issue in Indochina remains colonialism versus nationalism.

2. Political Concessions*

Wholehearted implementation of political concessions aimed at full independence for Vietnam would provide the French with maximum opportunity for rallying nationalist support for Bao Dai both from the "fence-sitters" and from the non-Communist nationalists associated with the Viet Minh. It is conceivable under such circumstances that a stable non-Communist regime might eventually be established in Vietnam and

*New political concessions have recently been announced by the French, but not enough information is yet available to assess their significance.

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French troops then could be relieved to fulfill European commitments.

Elsewhere in Asia the will to resist Communism would be stiffened since the issue of colonialism would no longer divert nationalist thinking from the real dangers of Soviet imperialism.

3. A Negotiated Settlement

Should the French feel that the scale of military operation necessary to contain the Viet Minh is not worth the effort, and that the necessary aid from the US is not to be forthcoming, they may attempt a negotiated settlement. If the French have a choice, however, between direct negotiation with Ho Chi Minh and negotiation through the US, the French will not hesitate to choose the latter. For French political figures could survive advocacy of bilateral negotiation.

B. The United States

1. Factors Conditioning US Courses of Action

Present French policy vis-a-vis Indochina is a major factor shaping US action to meet the crisis in that area. The United States can either operate in the context of current French policy or exert pressure to change that policy. Courses of action undertaken in the

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first instance will have short range effects, since the idea and idea of a lasting, non-Communist solution in Indochina appears to be the granting of real independence to Vietnam. US efforts to change French policy, on the other hand, will have uncertain results. They are likely to meet with bitter resentment in many French quarters, although even French statesmen would probably welcome constructive US proposals aimed at strengthening France's European defenses. Should France announce its unmistakable intention to grant Vietnam independence, however, much of the stigma attendant upon an intimate US association with French policy would be removed.

One of the major restraints on the US latitude of action in Indochina is the fact that the Viet Minh represents an essentially indigenous movement, even though Ho Chi Minh is outspokenly Stalinist and is aided by the Chinese Communists. It is therefore impossible to enlist the degree of support among non-Communist nations, particularly those in Asia, for an aggressive anti-Viet Minh policy as was mustered in opposition to North Korean aggression. Should Communist strategy run counter to present indications and dictate overt aggression in Indochina

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by Chinese Communist troops, however, a military action by the U.S. would meet with less opposition on the part of non-aligned Asian countries.

2. A Revision of US Policy

Recent policy decisions appear to rule out this course of action.

2. Acceleration of US Aid

According to current changes in French policy, the acceleration of US aid would only postpone the establishment of an unaligned Communist regime in Indochina. Although a such a course could be taken to more than postpone the problem in Indochina, it would tend to counter Communist aims elsewhere in Southeast Asia and would expedite US contribution to world Communism. On the other hand, the US would, in Asian eyes, be associated with the accelerated French colonial policy without endorsing any strengthening of the Bao Dai Government. Furthermore, aid to the Viet Nam by Communist China probably will be accelerated at a rate comparable to the flow of American aid to the North.

It, however, France would implement the commitment to ² ~~and~~ ₁ info-

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... to Vietnam, an effort to establish a coalition for the time-
 being, both in the US and the US would gain prestige in Asia and,
 most important, additional support would be rallied for the Government
 of the US. Under such circumstances, US aid could be more effective,
 although at this critical stage in the development of Viet Minh strength,
 there is no assurance that there would be significant defections from
 the Viet Minh, that a strong anti-Viet Minh spirit could be crystallized
 or that an effective national Vietnam army organized.

4. Full-scale US Military Intervention

This course of action would run the risk of war with Communist
 China. If such intervention did not materialize, the results would be
 the firm establishment of non-Communist governments in Indochina and
 military defeat of the Viet Minh in terms of conventional warfare.
 Communist warfare would continue, however, creating a continued drain
 on Vietnamese and Western resources alike. The situation probably would
 be analogous to that in China, but on a larger scale.

Direct US military intervention without French cooperation would
 lead Vietnam in many quarters to Communist propaganda of American

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superiority and might cause charges to be brought against the US in the UN. There would be a considerable loss of good will throughout Asia, particularly in India. Western Europe might be deterred by the knowledge that the United States in Indochina, as in Korea, was willing to fight Communist advances, although there probably would be some reservations about additional large US commitments in Asia at the possible cost of Western European security.

If the United States undertook to guarantee Vietnam's independence or to effect such a guarantee from France at the same time that US troops were committed in Indochina, stabilization of the Government of Vietnam might be achieved. In these circumstances, reaction in the non-Communist countries of Asia would probably be favorable in the long run although initially there would be suspicion of Western motives.

5. Consultation with Other Powers

Either as a distinct course of action or as a supplement to other courses, the US could successfully arrange joint diplomatic action with other interested countries, particularly the non-Communist Asian

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states and/or the UK. Joint US-UK action which excluded the Asian nations would probably be less desirable both from the viewpoint of the UK and the Asian nations than would multiparite action.

6. Mediation

US pressure to effect mediation of the Indochina dispute appears to be precluded by the present policies of France, the Vietnam Government, and the US.

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IV UN Courses of Action

A/ Basic Factors Affecting UN Action

In the first instance, the UN would be extremely reluctant to authorize any enforcement action in Indochina. However, in a case of flagrant and unequivocal aggression by the PRC, it would probably act were the chances of success reasonable. This reluctance to act would be present as long as French sovereignty over Indochina continued. The following factors are basic in any attempt to forecast UN reactions.

The tide of anti-colonial sentiment is still rising in the UN especially among the Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American members. As a result, opposition to continued French domination over Indochina is pronounced. Although UN nations other than the Communist bloc recognize that the US has no colonial ambitions of its own, nevertheless, the US is still under suspicion by some Asian members as being prone to temporize on colonial issues on account of its close links to colonial powers such as the UK and France. Thus substantial French concessions toward Indochinese independence would appear to be a

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necessary precondition for an active US role.

Even were France to proclaim its willingness to grant independence to Indochina, the US majority while probably willing to arbitrate, would hesitate to intervene with force in a civil war between Viet Nam and Viet Minh. It would not in any case authorize enforcement measures against Viet Minh until all possible measures of conciliation and adjustment had first been exhausted. Asian nations would still tend to view Viet Nam as the puppet of France. Against this are indications of growing recognition that Viet Minh may be an instrumentality for implementing international communist's expansionist policies. This awareness may work toward a revision of the former attitude displayed to Ho Chi Minh by India and Burma, which has ranged between sympathy and tolerance. Moreover, once the French had stepped aside, the Latin American nations, faced by a choice between Viet Minh and an independent Viet Nam would be influenced by Catholic sentiment against a Communist government and by their general inclination to support US policy in the absence of special controlling factors.

Finally, the Viet Minh would be unlikely to respect recommendations of the US unless backed by force. Ho Chi Minh would probably follow Soviet and

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Chinese Communist thought processes vis-a-vis the authority of the UN.

The following UN courses of action represent possible steps the UN might take in connection with the Indochina situation.

D. Establishment of a United Nations Commission.

A "UN Commission on Indochina/Vietnam" could be established at almost any stage of developments in Indochina. Such a commission would presumably be empowered to investigate and report on the situation in Indochina with recommendations as to what measures should be taken to restore and maintain peace. Inasmuch as a commission, presumably with important Asian representation, might recommend measures leading to a negotiated settlement and the withdrawal of French troops, the US and the West would have to be prepared to accept these recommendations or suffer a loss of prestige in the eyes of many UN members for disregarding them. A certain advantage would be served by sharing responsibility for the establishment of a Communist regime in Indochina if a commission recommended a withdrawal of French troops without substituting an effective force to oppose the Viet Minh. On the other hand, if a UN commission called for a cease-fire

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which the Viet Minh chose to disregard, that would react to Ho Chi Minh's disadvantage in so far as the true motives of his regime would be exposed in such a way that he would lose an unfettered amount of his nationalist backing in Vietnam as well as the sympathy of many of his Asian neighbors.

If a US commission recommended that France grant Vietnam independence as it would be likely to do, the US might find it could support such a program and France in turn would find it hard to reject. The repercussions of this plan of action would be to provide a maximum opportunity to rally nationalist support for an anti-Communist government in Vietnam, and to demonstrate to the world the good faith of the Western nations. There would be a net accrual of prestige in Asia to the West at the expense of the USSR and Communist China, as long as the latter opposed these moves. Although the French government responsible for France's withdrawal from Indochina would suffer among many political groups at home, France's prestige would be enhanced in the rest of the world, she would be relieved of heavy commitments in Indochina and the Communists in France would lose one of their favorite talking points.

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A second possibility of action through the UN is the establishment of a commission with limited powers to investigate Chinese Communist aid to the Viet Minh. An attempt to establish a border commission would have to run the risk of counter-charges by the USSR and satellites of US aid to Bao Dai and the French, since Communist China, from its point of view, is aiding a country it had duly recognized. If the UN acted to establish a border commission, it would probably be unable to operate in the frontier areas, almost all of which are now under Viet Minh control. A border commission by itself would not lead to a constructive solution in Indochina. Even if the commission were constituted and proved successful in demonstrating that the Viet Minh was supported by Communists outside Vietnam, unless preceded by French concessions, its findings would not clarify US or Western motives in the minds of most Asians nor necessarily lead to a lasting solution.

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48 ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~**D. Negotiation through UN auspices**

Peaceful settlement on the initiative of France, if taken through the UN, would enhance possibilities of bringing pressure to bear for the establishment of a regime expressing the will of the Vietnamese people and allowing for representation of all political groups. Ho Chi Minh could not flaunt the will of the United Nations with the same impunity to his reputation in Vietnamese eyes as he could that of France, though he would be in an equally strong position to refuse any settlement not on his terms (unless the UN were willing then to apply armed force to the problem.) It is fairly certain that Ho would not accept any truce under international auspices without a guarantee that French troops would be withdrawn in accordance with a definite time schedule. Unless a strong Vietnamese national army were created before a negotiated settlement took effect, a Communist regime might well be established.

There would be some advantage to the West in a peaceful settlement negotiated through the UN as opposed to one negotiated bilaterally. By working through the UN, responsibility would be shared for subsequent events in Vietnam, and demands of Asian nations that they be consulted on problems in which they have interest would be satisfied. Furthermore, there could be

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provision for an entree into the situation at a later date through a "UN Commission on Indochina/Vietnam", should the spirit of the settlement not be observed. French political leaders would be relieved of a good share of the burden of responsibility for a French withdrawal, which they would probably not be able to bear alone. Communist China and the USSR would be left in the position of advocating a military solution if they refused a negotiated settlement couched in equitable terms.

E. UN armed forces

An appeal could be made for the use of United Nations armed forces to repel a Chinese Communist invasion, to assist French Union forces in suppressing the Viet Minh, or to replace French troops until a stable Vietnamese Government can be established.

The United Nations would probably favorably consider an appeal to resist overt aggression as it did in the case of Korea, providing, as assumed, it would be procedurally possible to avoid obstruction by the Soviet bloc. Having thus entered the situation, the UN would probably insist on having a voice in any subsequent decisions as to the future of Indochina. The other Asian countries, should they associate themselves with this effort, would be further

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aligned with the West.

An appeal to assist French forces in suppressing the Viet Minh would not evoke the same response as in assisting the French to repel a Chinese Communist invasion, but would add fuel to Communist charges that the UN is being used as a means of imposing Western "imperialist" policy ~~mark~~ on other countries. Without a drastic revision of French policy, it is doubtful if Asian support could be mustered for a UN force in Indochina except to repel overt Chinese Communist invasion. While assistance in suppressing the Viet Minh might be the course of action most favored by France, there is little chance of its adoption.

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ANNEX 'A' CONFIDENTIAL**FRENCH-CONTROLLED FORCES IN INDOCHINA****1. Ground Forces****a. Strength****French Ground Forces (Forces Terrestres en Extrême Orient - FTEO)****Breakdown by races**

French	49,000	
Foreign Legion	16,500	
North African	22,500	
Senegalese	14,000	
Indochinese	43,000	(regularly enlisted)
Total	145,000	

**Indigenous Pro-French Ground Forces
Armies of the Associated States****Vietnam Army**

Mobile Force	7,500	(9 battalions - 5 are operational with 4,200)
Guards (Static Defense)	20,700	
Auxiliaries	29,000	
Total	57,200	

Laotian Army

Mobile Force	(1 battalion)
Gendarmerie	(11 companies)
Total	2,600

Cambodian Army

Mobile Force	(3 battalions)
Local Auxiliary	
Total	6,900

Miscellaneous Units (auxiliary and partisan groups)

Total	122,500
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TOTAL GROUND FORCES	334,200
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b. Disposition of French Ground Forces

Tonkin	53,000
Annam	23,500
Cochinchina	56,000
Laos	7,000
Cambodia	5,500

2. Naval ForcesFrench Naval Forces (Forces Maritimes en Extrême Orient - FMEO)

Personnel	8,750
Vessels (small craft and ships)	160
Aircraft	21

Bases:

Tonkin

Haiphong
Port Wallut
Phat Dien

Annam

Tourane
Quang Khe
Dong Hoi
Faifo
Nha Trang

Cochinchina

Saigon (Headquarters, main operating and repair base)
Cape St. Jacques
Ream
Peule Condore

Cambodia

Phnom Penh

3. Air ForcesFrench Air Forces (Forces Aériennes en Extrême Orient - FAEEO)

Personnel	5,828 (includes 246 officer and enlisted pilots)
Aircraft	
Fighter and Fighter-Reconnaissance	83
Transports	68
Liaison	50

Airfields

Tonkin

Bach Mai
Gia Lam
Haiphong

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Annam

Tourane
Mia Trang
Hue

Cochinchina

Tanapou Chat
Bion Hoa

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ANNEX B

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VIETNAM MILITARY POTENTIAL

The Vietnam Army has a total paper strength of 57,200, including a mobile force of nine battalions (7,500) only five of which are operational. In addition to the regular Vietnam Army are only 100,000 auxiliary or partisan troops, generally ill-equipped and sometimes of questionable loyalty. Examples of these are various militant religious groups such as the Cao daists; railway guards; village-defense units; and units composed of mountaineer tribesmen.

The build-up of these native troops into an efficient fighting force has the greatest political and military merit. Native troops, because of familiarity with the terrain, climate, language, and social life, are better suited to conduct anti-guerrilla operations than are regular French forces. From the political point of view, the early establishment of truly independent national armies would be concrete evidence of French sincerity in making concessions to Vietnamese nationalist aspirations.

The possibilities for a strong Vietnam Army have hardly been tapped thus far. With all allowances for the fact that an adequate corps of Vietnamese

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officers cannot be trained overnight, it is, nevertheless, certain that by the selection of likely candidates and already trained officers from among existing Vietnamese armed units and by permitting and encouraging the incorporation of non-Vietnamese military specialists, including French specialists, within and under the command of a Vietnam National Army the formation of this army could be considerably accelerated.

Bao Dai has stated that a command structure acceptable to him would be a Vietnam National Army under his command fighting alongside the French Regular Army, all under the supreme command of General Carpentier. Bao Dai desires that not only French training cadres but French combat cadres be incorporated into his army especially at the higher echelons. He is convinced that a separate Vietnam Army with French cadres in some units will not be paradoxical in the eyes of the Vietnamese so long as the Vietnamese Chief of State really has command and the right to hire, fire, and promote these officers. Bao Dai has also shown interest in the possibilities of strengthening his staff by employing officers from other foreign countries. He states that he has received letters from officers in India who have offered their services. The 8 March Agreements are particularly obstructive in this respect since they effectively forbid the hiring of non-French experts by the Vietnam Government.

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According to figures provided by the French, the total number of Vietnamese regulars and irregulars under arms is in excess of 200,000. A rough plan for the strengthening of the Vietnamese Army which has been agreed upon by French and Vietnamese representatives calls for the establishment of three light divisions and one mountain tribal division, a total of about 35,000 men. Reinforcements to the extent of 50,000 will be drawn from native ^{*(auxiliaries)*} ~~serving~~ ~~with the French Army and its suppliants~~. Thus, by the end of 1951, the Vietnam National Army should total about 35,000 men. The only large reservoir for the local recruitment of cadres for the Vietnam Army consists of the 43,000 Indochinese ^{*ese*} (almost all of whom are Vietnamese) now serving in the French Regular Army in Indochina. It is not yet clear what disposition is to be made of these troops, i.e., to what extent they will be incorporated into the projected 35,000-man army. No plan for military conscription has been formulated. The French Minister for Associated States expressed his opposition to conscription on the ground that this would tend to demoralize those elements of the population who have until just recently been subject to the severe conscription policy of the Viet Minh.

In terms of manpower, control of the Tonkin delta is the key to the for-

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nation of a strong National Army and ultimately to control over Vietnam.

Outside the delta, the population of North Vietnam is sparse and mainly of non-Vietnamese stock. The delta, which is wholly Vietnamese in population, is one of the most densely populated regions of the earth. Maximum concentration occurs along an axis extending from Hanoi through Nam Dinh to the coast. This area is, aside from sporadic Viet Minh guerrilla activity, still under the control of the French and their Vietnamese allies. The region of Nam Dinh (population 900,000) is inhabited largely by Vietnamese Catholics and, under the leadership of its native bishops, constitutes one of the strongest centers of anti-Communist activity. Small armed units under the authority of the bishops have long been in action against the Viet Minh. The bishops have expressed great eagerness to obtain US military aid, but they refuse to accept French control. Other areas of the Tonkin delta are ~~partly~~ ^{either} under Viet Minh control, ~~partly~~ ^{or} under the permanent authority of no one. Given sufficient aid to regain control of the delta and a will to encourage the development of an effective National Army it would probably be within the power of the French-Vietnamese forces to turn the tide of battle against the Viet Minh.

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ANNEX C

CONFIDENTIAL

UNITED STATES MILITARY AID TO FRENCH FORCES IN INDOCHINA

1. Fiscal Year 1950 Program

Ground Forces

Value

\$13,228,743

Categories

(primarily for 12 Indochinese battalions
of infantry, but some for FTEO)

ordnance equipment

engineer equipment

signal equipment

Delivery date

to be completed by January 1951

Navy

Value

\$13,457,999

Categories

Aircraft (F6F)

40

Landing Craft (LCVP)

36

Landing Support Vessels
(LSSL)

6

Patrol Craft

2

Delivery date

completed

Air

Value

\$3,722,544

Categories

Aircraft (C-47)

8

spare parts

ammunition

Delivery date

completed by 15 March 1951

2. Fiscal Year 1951 Program

Ground Forces

Value

\$55,000,000

Categories

(to equip 4 infantry battalions, 3 combat engineer
battalions)

signal

armored

engineer

medical

ammunition

maintenance equipment (for transport, engineer, artillery, signal and
medical units already existing)

Delivery date

five to six months

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Navy**CONFIDENTIAL**

Value		\$43,000,000
Categories		
Aircraft (Privateers)	10	
Harbor Tugs (YTL)	14	
Submarine Chaser (SC)	1	
Submarine Chaser (PC)	6	
landing craft	53	
Oiler (YOG)	1	
Repair Ship (ARL)	1	
spare parts for equipment		
Delivery date	five-six months (aircraft being flown in now)	

Air

Value		\$35,000,000
Categories		
Aircraft (F8F)	90	
Aircraft (B-26)	30	
Fuel Servicing Units	10	
bombs		
ammunition		
Delivery date	within six months (B-26's being flown in now)	

3.

TOTAL VALUE OF 1950 AND 1951 PROGRAMS**\$163,409,286****CONFIDENTIAL**~~TOP SECRET~~

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ANNEX D

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RECENTLY PUBLISHED INTELLIGENCE REPORTS AND ESTIMATES
ON THE INDOCHINA SITUATION

<u>Report Number</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Security Classification</u>
CIA/RE 92-49	10 February 1950	Crisis in Indochina	Secret
OIR No. 5222	1 June 1950	Factors Involved in Chinese Communist Military Policy toward Indochina	Secret
OIR No. 4744	15 August 1950	The French Union	Confidential
JIC 529/1	16 August 1950	Estimate of the Indochinese Situation	Top Secret
FMAOC D-33/6	24 August 1950	Report on Indochina (Melby-Erskine Report)	Top Secret
CIA/RE 50-50	7 September 1950	Prospects for the Defense of Indochina against a Chinese Communist Invasion	Secret
CIA/RE 50-50 (Supplement)	7 September 1950	Prospects for Chinese Communist Action in Indochina during 1950	Secret
CIA/RE 58-50	10 October 1950	Critical Situations in the Far East	Top Secret
CIA/RE 29-50	13 October 1950	Consequences to the US of Communist Domination of Mainland Southeast Asia	Secret
DI/USAF	18 October 1950	An Estimate of the Situation in Indochina as of October 1950	Top Secret
CIA/RE Weekly	20 October 1950	Indochina Crisis	Top Secret

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